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Good News



Bible

Today's English Version

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LOOKING AT THE GOOD NEWS BIBLE

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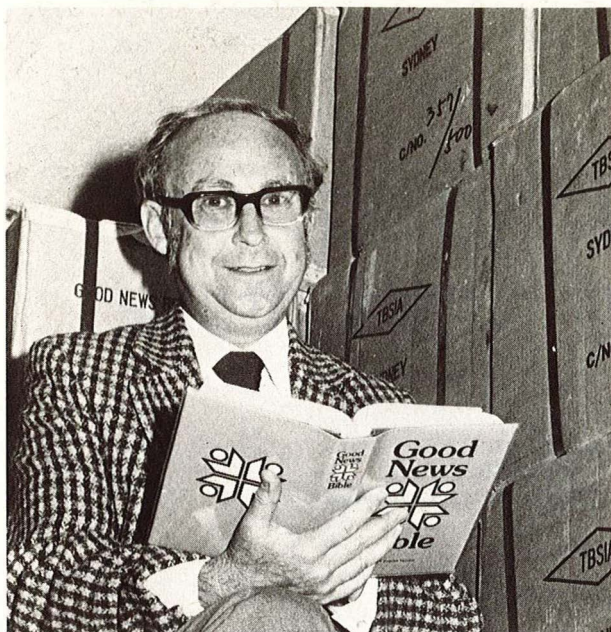
by the Reverend Euan McG. Fry.



*Margaretta Mary Woodriff
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New Zealand 1967 -

Editor of the United Bible Societies' publication, the Practical Papers
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

We are grateful to the Australian Broadcasting Commission for permission to
reproduce these talks given by The Reverend Euan Fry, in a "By The Way" series
during the week 6th - 10th December, 1976.

Introduction

**by the Reverend James Payne, General Secretary of the
Bible Society in Australia.**

The release of the Good News Bible in Australia on December 6
was an historic occasion for the Christian Church and, of course, for
the Bible Society. This translation is distinguished from all others by its
use of what is linguistically known as "common language", that is, the
language shared in everyday common speech by the over 600 million
people throughout the world who employ the English language in daily
communication, whether educated or uneducated.

We believe that the Good News Bible will carve out for itself an
important niche in the history of Bible translation as have other great
translations such as the Authorized Version and the Revised Standard
Version.

The Australian Broadcasting Commission invited my colleague,
the Reverend Euan McG. Fry, who is Translations Secretary for the
Bible Societies of Australia and New Zealand, to discuss aspects of this
new, exciting translation of the Bible in its programme "By the Way".
In response to many requests the Bible Society has now published the
five talks. I warmly commend this booklet and hope that it will be
widely circulated.

When Her Majesty the Queen was presented with a copy of the
Bible at her Coronation, it was described to her as "the most valuable
thing that this world affords." This we believe to be true. — Will you
pray that the Bible Society Movement may receive such support as to
ensure that the Good News of the Gospel will be freely available not
only to Christians but to the millions in this country and throughout the
world, still unreached for Jesus Christ.

Canberra.

December, 1976.

LOOKING AT THE GOOD NEWS BIBLE

A new version of the Bible is now on sale in Australia. It is the **Good News Bible**, a version translated and published by the Bible Societies. (The British edition sold in Australia is published and distributed by the Bible Societies in association with Collins/Fontana.)

The Good News Bible is one of the biggest publishing events of all time, and the new version looks set to become a best-seller overnight. An initial printing of one million copies of the British edition have been distributed in the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth countries, and these were sold within the first 3 months. The American Bible Society expects to print and sell 10 million copies of its edition in the first year of production.

At the time of its release this new version seems to be more likely than any other modern version to achieve the widespread distribution and acceptance that will allow it to claim the title of "People's Bible". An indication of this is seen in the fact that the New Testament of this translation, **Today's English Version**, has sold more than 50 million copies since it was released in 1966. And through the New Testament the version has already become widely known and accepted.

Something dramatically different

I suppose there will be some people who will groan when they hear that this new translation of the Bible has appeared, and say, "Not another one! Haven't we got more than enough versions now?" I would agree that we may well question the need for some of the recent versions, which do not seem to differ significantly from previous versions. However, it is no exaggeration to say that in the Good News Bible we have something which is dramatically different in concept from all other English translations. Here we have at last what has been needed for a long time, an accurate reliable translation in that form of English which is common to all who read and write it.

The release of this Bible will be good news for those who want a clear, simple, straightforward text of the Bible to read. Those, including children and teenagers, who may have tried reading the Bible, but found other versions too difficult, should be happy with this version. And everyone who would like to take a fresher and clearer look at what the Bible really says should get a copy too.

Three impressions

As I have been reading the Good News Bible there are three things in particular that have impressed me:

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- Firstly, its style is very plain and direct. You could say that it's just like a newspaper to read — although of course what is in the Bible isn't always what you would expect to find in the newspaper.
- Secondly, it is a very readable Bible. I don't think I can define what it is that makes it so readable but it seems to invite you to sit down and read whole sections of it, in the way you would read stories or articles in a magazine. And, incidentally, reading the Bible this way we read it very much in the way the authors of the original text intended it to be read.
- Then, thirdly, the "humanness" of the Bible comes through dramatically in this translation. More than in any other version I have read, I have felt that the people of the Bible are real people like myself, living in real human situations, and responding to God in those situations. This must make the Bible come across as being relevant to us today, more than it seems to do in other versions.

First Bible Society translation

Although the Bible Societies have been publishing and distributing the Bible in English for more than 170 years, the Good News Bible is the first Bible Society translation of the Bible in English. Now the fact that this is the Bible Societies' own translation is quite important, because even though a translation must always be a translation of the text of the Bible, in a number of ways this translation reflects the Bible Society view of the Bible. This view is expressed in a statement in the final paragraph of the preface, which says: "The Bible is not simply great literature to be admired and revered; it is Good News for all people everywhere — a message both to be understood and to be applied in daily life."

In a recent statement the Reverend James R. Payne General Secretary of the Bible Society in Australia, and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the United Bible Societies, had this to say about the world Bible Societies movement:

"When somebody, previously disinterested in the Bible, reads it in a modern translation and says, 'It really lives', we see the continuing necessity for the work of the Bible Societies. Since 1804 our Movement has been involved in the vital task of communicating God's Word written to all people.

"For when everything else has been done that needs to be done — new and updated translations, efficient and speedy production, imaginative distribution — the main purpose of the Bible Societies is to ensure that men and women, boys and girls, shall discover in every age the relevance of the Bible and have the opportunity to respond to its message."

Features for mass circulation

The Bible Societies' view of the Bible as the communication of God's message to people everywhere, and their concern to distribute it as widely as possible, are reflected in the Good News Bible.

- For a start it was a principle of critical importance in making the translation that the text should everywhere be intelligible to the average reader. Even though there might be things in the Bible with which the modern reader is not familiar he should always be able to understand what the text says.
- There was also careful control of the style and the level of language used in the translation, so that nothing would be beyond the understanding of the average speaker of English.
- Then the format of the book itself is in the popular image, through the range of different editions that will be available; and the pricing of it puts it in the popular mass circulation market.
- Within every edition, too there is a wider range of features to assist the reader in understanding the text than are usually found in the cheaper standard editions of the Bible.

It should be obvious how these features give effect to the thinking that the Bible is for everyone and must be got to everyone by every possible means. I will have more to say about each of them later. But now, to give an idea of the style of the new translation, and its clarity, here is a passage taken from the Old Testament. It is the story of how the Lord spoke to Samuel, taken from the first book of Samuel, chapter 3:

The Lord Appears to Samuel

3 In those days, when the boy Samuel was serving the LORD under the direction of Eli, there were very few messages from the LORD, and visions from him were quite rare. ²One night Eli, who was now almost blind, was sleeping in his own room; ³Samuel was sleeping in the sanctuary, where the sacred Covenant Box was. Before dawn, while the lamp was still burning, ⁴the LORD called Samuel. He answered, "Yes, sir!" ⁵and ran to Eli and said, "You called me, and here I am."

But Eli answered, "I didn't call you; go back to bed." So Samuel went back to bed.

⁶⁻⁷The LORD called Samuel again. The boy did not know that it was the LORD, because the LORD had never spoken to him before. So he got up, went to Eli, and said, "You called me, and here I am."

But Eli answered, "My son, I didn't call you; go back to bed."

⁸The LORD called Samuel a third time; he got up, went to Eli, and said, "You called me, and here I am."

Then Eli realized that it was the LORD who was calling the boy, ⁹so he said to him, "Go back to bed; and if he calls you again, say, 'Speak, LORD, your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went back to bed.

¹⁰The LORD came and stood there, and called as he had before, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Samuel answered, "Speak; your servant is listening."

¹¹The LORD said to him, "Some day I am going to do something to the people of Israel that is so terrible that everyone who hears about it will be stunned. ¹²On that day I will carry out all my threats against Eli's family, from beginning to end. ¹³I have already told him^k that I am going to punish his family for ever because his sons have spoken evil things against me. Eli knew they were doing this, but he did not stop them. ¹⁴So I solemnly declare to the family of Eli that no sacrifice or offering will ever be able to remove the consequences of this terrible sin."

THE PRINCIPLES OF TRANSLATION

In its foreword the Good News Bible describes itself as a “translation which seeks to state clearly and accurately the meaning of the original text in words and forms that are widely accepted by people who use English as a means of communication”. It states its aim as “to give today’s readers maximum understanding of the content of the original texts.” Communication of the meaning of the text is clearly the principal goal of this new translation.

Dynamic equivalence

In communicating the meaning of the text the overriding principle which has guided the translators is what is known as dynamic equivalence. Dynamic equivalence means reproducing the meaning of the text in the language of the reader in such a way that he will respond to it essentially as the original readers or hearers did — both in terms of his understanding of it, and in the sort of feelings he has about it. In following this principle, the translator is concerned with the meaning of the original text, rather than with the form of words in which it comes. And he pays constant attention to how his average reader is likely to understand what he produces, and react to it.

With this approach the translation process works something like this.

- First, the meaning of the original text is carefully analysed and all the elements of meaning are sorted out. The analysis takes care of what is stated explicitly in the text, and also of what would have been implicit in it for the hearers or readers in the original situation.
- Then, all of the elements of meaning are transferred into the language of the present day readers, with the strict control that nothing is omitted, nothing added, nothing distorted.
- Finally, the translator works out the best way of expressing the whole meaning for the readers he has in mind.

Reproducing the meaning

With the dynamic equivalence approach the form of the original text will often be changed in the translation process, so that the meaning can be faithfully reproduced and expressed in the clearest possible way. We find in the Good News Bible that no attempt is made to translate a given Hebrew or Greek word by the same word in English every time; rather the translators seek to use at all times the English word or expression that most faithfully and naturally represents the meaning of the Hebrew or Greek word in the context in which it is used. Likewise, no attempt is made to reproduce in English the parts of speech, sentence structure, word order, and grammatical devices of the original texts.

The Good News Bible also shows changes in the form of the original text in terms of certain information which is either expressed or left implicit. Information which we may assume original readers were well aware of, but which the modern reader may not be aware of, is often made explicit in the translation. On the other hand, certain information which is clearly redundant in its context, and which would not be natural or meaningful if formally reproduced in English, has been omitted. In a good many places material with a lot of repetition and redundant information has been set out in the form of a list or tabulation to allow it to read more naturally in English.

See the difference

Because it has been produced using the dynamic equivalence approach, the Good News Bible differs very considerably from the Authorised Version — Revised Standard Version tradition, in which verbal consistency and formal correspondence often take precedence over natural and idiomatic usage of the English language. To get an idea of the extent of the difference between the two approaches to translation, let’s listen to a short passage read from both the Revised Standard Version and the Good News Bible.

This is a passage from the debating section of the book of Job, chapter 4, verses 2 to 6. Here Job’s friend Eliphaz starts off his argument by saying to Job:

Revised Standard Version

- 4 Then El’iphaz the Te’manite answered:
2 “If one ventures a word with you, will
you be offended?
Yet who can keep from speaking?
3 Behold, you have instructed many,
and you have strengthened the weak
hands.
4 Your words have upheld him who was
stumbling,
and you have made firm the feeble
knees.
5 But now it has come to you, and you are
impatient;
it touches you, and you are dismayed.
6 Is not your fear of God your confidence,
and the integrity of your ways your
hope?

Good News Bible

- 4 Eliphaz
1-2 Job, will you be annoyed if I
speak?
I can’t keep quiet any longer.
3 You have taught many people
and given strength to feeble hands.
4 When someone stumbled, weak and
tired,
your words encouraged him to stand.
5 Now it’s your turn to be in trouble,
and you are too stunned to face it.
6 You worshipped God, and your life was
blameless;
and so you should have confidence
and hope.

An accurate translation

The text of the Good News Bible is so clear and simple, and communicates its message so well, that there is a tendency for some people to feel that it can’t be an accurate or professional translation. When the New Testament was released in 1966 there were people who actually said, “This can’t be the Bible — I can understand it”! And then there are those who feel that because it is so different from the traditional translations it must be some sort of paraphrase.

Let's think carefully about this question of accuracy. From the dynamic equivalence point of view, the accuracy of a translation must be measured in terms of the understanding readers have of the text. In the principles which guided the translators of the Good News Bible this definition is given: "Accuracy, which is the first and central aim of the translation, is measured by the degree to which the reader of the translation understands the meaning of the text in the same way as the reader of the original text did."

When we think about this way of looking at accuracy I think we must agree that it makes good sense. After all, can we really say that a translation, which may be literally and technically correct as far as the scholar is concerned, is accurate, if the majority of readers misunderstand it, or do not understand it at all? And I think that we can see that the dynamic equivalence approach to translation actually produces a more accurate translation for most readers than the older traditional texts!

The simplicity of the Good News Bible translation is really quite deceptive, then. Far from being a loose rendition of the text, it is intended to be a fully accurate modern English translation, in terms of correct understanding by the average reader.

Sound procedures

In keeping with the goal of producing an accurate and reliable translation, the text of the Good News Bible has been produced by a team of very competent scholars working to a set of sound and sophisticated translation principles. The text of the translation has been based on the best editions of the original texts available; and sound procedures have been applied for translating where there are difficulties found in those texts. As far as exegesis goes, that is the understanding of the meaning of the text, the principle applied has been that where problems arose eccentricities and fads would be avoided, and the translation made to reflect the generally accepted interpretation of current scholarship. For the reader who wants to follow how the original text has been handled in difficult places, there is a good system of textual footnotes. These indicate where the translators felt compelled to base the translation on some text other than the Hebrew, and where there are other possible ways of understanding the text.

Competent scholarship

The translation was produced by a panel of seven translators, set up by the American Bible Society. The panel was headed by Dr. Robert G. Bratcher, and all its members are scholars of high repute, highly qualified in the field of Biblical languages and Biblical studies. It may be of interest, too, to note that all of the translators are from what we

may call the "conservative" tradition. In addition to the panel of translators the American Bible Society also appointed an editorial review panel of 8 members. Their responsibility was to read all the manuscript text as it was produced, in order to submit comment back to the translators, and eventually to recommend publication of the whole text.

The whole procedure of making the translation gives the impression of a thorough and professional piece of work. And while with any translation there will always be interpretations and aspects which may be criticised, in the light of the principles and procedures which have been followed, one can only recommend the Good News Bible as being a thoroughly accurate and reliable translation.

THE LANGUAGE AND STYLE

The Good News Bible is a **common language** translation. In fact it has been described as the first common language Bible in English. This expression "common language" may mean different things to different people, so let me explain further what it means in relation to the Good News Bible.

Everyday language

Common language means firstly, the everyday language that large numbers of people use and understand. And it means a form of language that does not make use of a lot of technical terms. It is the most appropriate form of language to use for any communication, including a translation of the Bible, which is to be understood by the majority of people who speak a given language.

Of course, with the long influence of the Authorised Version there are many people who somehow feel that it's not quite right for the Bible to be in common language — it has to come in a special sacred literary sort of language! So I should point out that the language in which the New Testament was first produced was common language, what was known as the *koiné* form of Greek. The New Testament was not written, as it might have been, in literary Greek, but in that common form of Greek spoken by ordinary people in many nations. And the Old Testament too, was produced in the Hebrew language which was the common language of the Israelite people at the time. So really we may say that, in its use of common everyday language, the Good News Bible is probably closer to the form of language of the original text than almost any other translation.

A further dimension

But there is another dimension to the expression "common language" as it is used of the Good News Bible, and it is in this dimension that the new translation differs from every other English translation. To give the

term a more precise definition, common language means that part of the English language that is common to all who read and write it, irrespective of the degree of formal education, social status, or national origin.

Within what we call the English language there are really a great many varieties of language. We are all aware of the regional speech differences, and the forms of language which are related to the different levels of education, socio-economic status, and occupational interest of different people. Now each variety of language has elements of English usage which are not found in other varieties, and may not even be known to speakers of the other varieties. But there is also a considerable area of "overlap" between the varieties of language which are in use — English usage which is common to all speakers.

The area of "overlap"

When we refer to the Good News Bible as a common language translation, we mean, then, that it deliberately restricts itself to the use of language in the area of "overlap", that part of English which is used in common by all speakers. It makes use of this part and only this part, so that it can be understood well by the greatest possible number of English speakers. The panel of translators defined the level of language they wanted to use as follows: "Translation is to be in acceptable literary English at the common level, that is a level of syntax and lexicon which no user of English would disdain to use, which no native speaker of English would fail to understand, and which those who have learned English as a second language would find easily comprehensible."

Other recent English translations have used what they regard as current idiomatic English, but none is really a common language translation in the sense that the Good News Bible is. And it is because of this unique feature that I feel the Good News Bible will have a far wider appeal than all other recent translations.

"Plain Jane" Bible

When we come to look at the style of the Good News Bible the first word that comes to mind to describe it is "plain". The effect of plainness is such that soon after the New Testament appeared it was featured in one of our daily newspapers as the "Plain Jane" Bible. Of course the plain style is a result of the application of the common language principle; but it may not be to everyone's taste, especially in those parts of the Bible which many people feel should be more "literary" or "poetic".

At this point it may be interesting to compare the Good News Bible with another modern English translation, the New English Bible. Both translations have been made using the dynamic equivalence approach, which is concerned with the meaning of the text rather than its form. Both change the form of the text quite radically as they seek

to express the meaning clearly and naturally. But they are very different in the level of language which they use. On the one hand the New English Bible deliberately sets out to make use of all the resources of the English language. On the other hand the Good News Bible deliberately restricts itself to that part of the English language that is common to all who read and write it. As a result of this difference, the New English Bible appeals mainly to the rather limited circle of people capable of appreciating high level English. The Good News Bible will appeal to the masses of average English speakers everywhere, who find in it language that they can fully understand.

To illustrate the difference in language between the two translations let us look at part of a well known Psalm, Psalm 90:

New English Bible

90

The everlasting God and mortal man

Lord, thou hast been our refuge 1
from generation to generation.
Before the mountains were brought forth, 2
or earth and world were born in travail,
from age to age everlasting thou art God.
Thou turnest man back into dust; 3
'Turn back,' thou sayest, 'you sons of
men';
for in thy sight a thousand years are as 4
yesterday;
a night-watch passes, and thou hast cut 5
them off;
they are like a dream at daybreak,
they fade like grass which springs up* with 6
the morning
but when evening comes is parched and
withered.
So we are brought to an end by thy anger 7
and silenced by thy wrath.
Thou dost lay bare our iniquities before 8
thee
and our lusts in the full light of thy
presence.
All our days go by under the shadow of 9
thy wrath;
our years die away like a murmur.
Seventy years is the span of our life, 10
eighty if our strength holds;*
the hurrying years are labour and sorrow,
so quickly they pass and are forgotten.

Good News Bible

Of God and Man

90 O Lord, you have always been our home.

2 Before you created the hills
or brought the world into being,
you were eternally God,
and will be God for ever.

3 You tell man to return to what he was;
you change him back to dust.

4 A thousand years to you are like one
day;
they are like yesterday, already gone,
like a short hour in the night.

5 You carry us away like a flood;
we last no longer than a dream.

We are like weeds that sprout in the
morning,

6 that grow and burst into bloom,
then dry up and die in the evening.

7 We are destroyed by your anger;
we are terrified by your fury.

8 You place our sins before you,
our secret sins where you can see
them.

9 Our life is cut short by your anger;
it fades away like a whisper.

10 Seventy years is all we have—
eighty years, if we are strong;
yet all they bring us is trouble and
sorrow;
life is soon over, and we are gone.

It is clear that the Good News Bible does not reach the literary heights of the New English Bible. Nevertheless I think that we can recognise the force of the text coming through in it.

Text which reads well

While the style of the Good News Bible is controlled to an extent by the application of the common language principle, the translators have made every effort to produce a text which reads well. I don't think we would have found too many faults with that passage from Psalm 90. The translators have deliberately tried to avoid such things as difficult combinations of sounds, tongue-twisting phrases, and accidental rhymes. Slang has been avoided altogether, and as a rule distinct colloquialisms are not used. While the common language principle always applied, there was no artificial restriction on the choice of vocabulary — however, where it was felt that a rarely used word or expression should be used, special care was taken to make sure that the word would be readily understood in its context.

Only language in current use has been used, and so the Good News Bible sounds thoroughly modern. However, no attempt has been made to modernise the text itself: it keeps its Biblical setting. It was one of the principles of translation that the English text would endeavour to preserve the historical and cultural features of the original text.

SOME FEATURES OF THE BOOK

The Good News Bible is intended to be a "People's Bible", a Bible for mass circulation and widespread use. So everything about it has been designed to make it an attractive book and one that is easy to read. And as the Bible Society goes about promoting the sales and use of the new version, these features of attractiveness and readability are the things that are being emphasised.

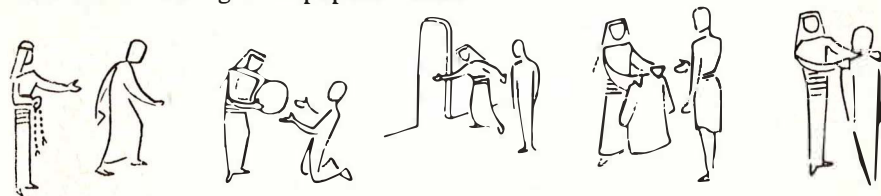
It looks and feels good

Let's look at some of the features of the Good News Bible as a book, and see how they fit in with the "People's Bible" concept. The first thing people will notice is the cover. In the hardcover edition this is plain but quite striking, with just the title on a yellow background, and in the centre of the page the symbol of the version in black outline. For the paperback the wording and symbol are the same, but they are printed over a very attractive colour photograph of the sun setting through clouds — the symbol appearing against the white disc of the sun. This is the age of the use of symbols for identity, and the Good News Bible symbol appears to be suitably simple and attractive.

In both editions the book itself feels good. The paperback particularly is light in weight and compact in size, and it is nice to handle. The hardcover edition is a little larger in size, but it too will be easy to hold and read.

Illustrated and easy to read

Inside the book the type is very clear, even though it is rather small. And the setting out of the text in two columns is quite attractive. But it is the pictures that are the most striking feature when the book is open. The line drawings of Swiss artist Annie Vallotton have already become famous from the "Good News for Modern Man" New Testament. Now there are some 600 of these same illustrations scattered throughout the whole Bible, including a number of full page sequences of pictures. The illustrations do so much to give the reader the impression that he is looking at a popular book.



The text of the Good News Bible is delightfully readable and easy to understand, of course. I have already discussed some of the translation principles which make the text so clear and intelligible. What I should say now is that I think the everyday, natural English of the text itself will eventually be the greatest single factor working for acceptance of this version as a "People's Bible".

A number of aids

Along with the text the reader of the Good News Bible is supplied with a number of aids to the understanding of the text. There are headings which break up the text into logical sections, footnotes which give additional cultural information where this is necessary, a wordlist explaining words which may be unfamiliar, 12 different maps, and an outline chart of Bible history. There are also introductions to each of the individual books of the Bible which set out the main themes and the contents of each. These extra features, which are found in every edition, all contribute to making the Good News Bible easy to use and understand. And with them the reader really has everything he or she needs for understanding within the covers of the one book. Somebody has said that with this version the Bible is actually easier to understand than most of the books which are written to explain it!

Here is a sample from the introductions I have just referred to, the introduction to the book of Exodus:

EXODUS

INTRODUCTION

The name *Exodus* means 'departure,' and refers to the central event in Israel's history, which is described in this book—the departure of the people of Israel from Egypt, where they had been slaves. The book has three main parts: (1) The freeing of the Hebrews from slavery and their journey to Mount Sinai. (2) God's covenant with his people at Sinai, which gave them moral, civil, and religious laws to live by. (3) The building and furnishing of a place of worship for Israel, and laws regarding the priests and the worship of God.

Above all, this book describes what God did, as he liberated his enslaved people and formed them into a nation with hope for the future.

The central human figure in the book is Moses, the man whom God chose to lead his people from Egypt. The most widely known part of the book is the list of the Ten Commandments in chapter 20.

Outline of Contents

The Israelites set free from Egypt 1.1—15.21

a. Slaves in Egypt 1.1-22

b. Moses' birth and early life 2.1—4.31

c. Moses and Aaron confront the king of Egypt 5.1—11.10

d. The Passover and the departure from Egypt 12.1—15.21

From the Sea of Reeds to Mount Sinai 15.22—18.27

The Law and the covenant 19.1—24.18

The Covenant Tent and instructions for worship 25.1—40.38

Promoted with confidence

The Bible Society in Australia has launched an intensive campaign to promote the Good News Bible. In fact the scale of the promotion of this Bible will exceed by far anything that the Bible Society has done in the past for the release of a new version or edition.

The main reason for the big campaign is that the Bible Society is so confident of what it has to offer in the Good News Bible. Everything about the production is right for the widest possible distribution and use: the text which is so easy to read and understand, the attractive appearance of the book, the pictures and the range of other features to help the reader. Then the price at which the book is being sold is very reasonable, too. Both the paperback and hardcover edition are being sold at what are almost "give away" prices by today's standards.

Promotional theme

The theme which is being used to promote the Good News Bible is "**Enjoy Good News everyday**". The offer of the new version is made an invitation to enjoy reading the Bible in an easy-to-understand text and an attractive format. And the theme suggests that reading this Bible regularly will provide something good, in contrast to the bad news which comes from every direction. With the new version the Bible is not to be seen any longer as a mysterious black book — it is a clear, enjoyable message, to be read and followed.

Newspaper advertisements, posters, radio and TV spots, all featuring the "Enjoy Good News" theme, are being used to bring the Good News Bible before the public. And already a very heavy distribution is under way. The Bible Society in Australia placed initial orders for 200,000 copies, the equivalent of the total annual sales of all versions of the Bible in Australia over the past few years. Most of these copies are already sold and already further substantial orders have been placed.

Supermarkets later?

Equal quantities of the paperback and hardcover edition have been ordered initially, and at this stage it is expected that sales of the two editions will be in almost equal proportions. People who are already Bible users are expected to be the main buyers of the hardcover edition. Others who may just want to try out the new Bible will probably account for a lot of the paperback sales. At first the bulk of sales will be through the Bible Society's own depots and other religious book shops, with paperbacks going into other commercial booksellers, including newsagents. Selling in supermarkets and chainstores may come later when stocks become more plentiful.

USEFULNESS AND IMPACT

So far I have discussed this new version from the point of view of its translation, its level of language, and its format as a book; and I have shown, I think, that from all these points of view it is well suited to the role of a "People's Bible", a Bible for widespread distribution and use.

Now, while still thinking of the Good News Bible as a "People's Bible", I want to suggest that there are certain groups of people in our Australian society who will find it particularly useful. These are people in different categories who for one reason or another find all other versions of the Bible unattractive.

Young people

Firstly, children and teenagers should find the Good News Bible the best Bible for them. Here I am thinking particularly of boys and girls in the 9 - 14 age range, for whom the common language used will not go beyond what they know and use themselves. The New Testament "Good News for Modern Man" has already proved very popular with children and teenagers. And in fact a special edition of it with blue denim covers the "jeans edition", was produced especially for this age group in Australia. Now schools and Sunday Schools look like being big users of the Good News Bible.

Second language speakers

Another group who will appreciate the new Bible are the large number of people who speak English as their second language. When the New Testament was planned and produced it was intended primarily for people in this category all round the world. Now since the translation has been so well accepted by native speakers of English, the full Good News Bible has been produced for all who use English; but the translators have always kept the special needs of second language speakers in mind. Here again it is the use of common language which makes this version easier for them to understand than other standard versions.

Actually when we think of second language users of English in Australia we are really thinking of two distinct groups. On the one hand there are the ethnic groups, made up of people who have come to Australia from other parts of the world, and for whom the English language is part of the new way of life they have adopted here. On the other hand there are the tribal aboriginal people, whose ancestors were speaking their tribal languages in Australia before English speakers came on the scene. For both of these groups the Good News Bible would be the version of choice in English. And for the many thousands of them who are still grappling with English, and who use it at a limited level of comprehension, this version can be helpful where no other version can be understood at all.

While we are talking about second language speakers of English, it is interesting that the Good News Bible is turning out to be a very useful tool for people working to produce the Bible in other languages. In particular, second language speakers of English in the Pacific area, who are translating the Bible into their own languages, are making a lot of use of it. They are finding it generally much more helpful than other English versions, because the meaning of the original texts comes through so clearly in it.

Not religious

Another large group of people who should appreciate the Good News Bible are those who do not regard themselves as religious, in the

sense of belonging to a church and attending its services. Such people should be able to read this Bible easily because it is not religious in language or style and it does not look particularly like a religious book either. The "man in the street" has been able to buy and read the "Good News for Modern Man" New Testament without embarrassment, and I feel sure he will buy and read the Good News Bible in the same way.

Because its text is a good one for the "man in the street", this Bible should be the one mainly used by committed Christians in evangelism and for sharing with others. Each year the Bible Society produces for this kind of use tens of thousands of Bible portions and selections, and in the vast majority of these, the text will be taken from the Good News Bible.

A section of the Bible that is often printed as a separate selection is from Matthew chapter 6, which is part of the Sermon on the Mount. In the Good News Bible it reads:

Riches in Heaven

(Luke 12.33-34)

19 "Do not store up riches for yourselves here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal. ²⁰Instead, store up riches for yourselves in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and robbers cannot break in and steal. ²¹For your heart will always be where your riches are.

The Light of the Body

(Luke 11.34-36)

22 "The eyes are like a lamp for the body. If your eyes are sound, your whole body will be full of light; ²³but if your eyes are no good, your body will be in darkness. So if the light in you is darkness, how terribly dark it will be!

God and Possessions

(Luke 16.13; 12.22-31)

24 "No one can be a slave of two masters; he will hate one and love the other; he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

25 "This is why I tell you not to be worried about the food and drink you need in order to stay alive, or about clothes for your body. After all, isn't life worth more than food? And isn't the body worth

more than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds flying around: they do not sow seeds, gather a harvest and put it in barns; yet your Father in heaven takes care of them! Aren't you worth much more than birds? ²⁷Can any of you live a bit longer^d by worrying about it?

28 "And why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow: they do not work or make clothes for themselves. ²⁹But I tell you that not even King Solomon with all his wealth had clothes as beautiful as one of these flowers. ³⁰It is God who clothes the wild grass—grass that is here today and gone tomorrow, burnt up in the oven. Won't he be all the more sure to clothe you? How little faith you have!

31 "So do not start worrying: 'Where will my food come from? or my drink? or my clothes?' ³²(These are the things the pagans are always concerned about.) Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. ³³Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things. ³⁴So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings.

The impact on Barry McGuire

So the new version, the Good News Bible is here. What sort of impact is it likely to have?

The Bible is a book which is able to capture people, which is able to change people's lives, where its message is understood and followed. And because this new version is so clear and readable the Bible message must come through in it to a lot of people. The New Testament of this Bible has been available for ten years now, and more than 50,000,000 copies of it have been bought, a million of those in Australia. Already, all round the world, it has grabbed people and had its impact in their lives. Take for example the experience of Barry McGuire.

Barry McGuire was a leading actor in the Broadway production of "Hair". He had no thought of becoming a Christian. In fact he thought Christianity was causing all the problems in the world. He had been in the drug world for about 10 years, when one day he went to the home of a friend who used to keep "grass" under his coffee table.

That particular day the friend had a copy of "Good News for Modern Man" on the table. Barry didn't know it was the New Testament. He thought, "Hey, I'm a modern man, and I could use some good news." So he took the book home.

To continue the story in his own words: "The first thing that I saw was that it was the New Testament, and I thought, 'Oh, no! It's that Jesus trip again.' When I started to read the words of Jesus, I was 35 years old and never read a Bible in my life, and man it just convicted me. It opened my eyes, showed me who I was, who God was, who Jesus was, the link between God and myself through Christ, what the Resurrection and Crucifixion was all about. It was just so heavy for me that I didn't know what to do."

Good News is good news

God came into Barry McGuire's life through reading the Good News New Testament. And he has come into the lives of many others too as they have read it. Now the whole Bible has been released, which presents its message in the same clear and open way. So the version seems certain to go on making its impact wherever it is read. As the foreword to the book says, the Bible Societies are releasing it in the desire "that people everywhere will not only find increased understanding through the reading and study of this translation, but will also find a saving hope through faith in God who made possible this message of Good News for all people."

The Good News Bible is good news. At last we have in English a Bible which everyone can read and understand, and which everyone can enjoy reading. Whatever your level of interest in the Bible is, I would recommend that you get a copy of this new version, and try it out for yourself.

